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THE BIWEEKLY MUSIC MAGAZINE

HALL OF FAME:
JOHNNY HODGES



Johnny Hodges' Passion
Flower Solo

RECORD OF THE YEAR
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record REVIEWS

JAKI BYARD

SOLO PIANO—Prestige 7686: *New Orleans Strut*; *Spanish Tinge No. 2*; *Top of the Gate Rag*; *A Basin Street Ballad*; *The Hollis Stomp*; *Hello Young Lovers*; *Seasons*; *I Know a Place/Let the Good Times Roll*; *Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans*.

Personnel: Byard, piano.

db/RC Rating: ★★★★★

Solo albums by pianists are rare these days, perhaps because few (except the old masters) are really capable of playing a full, two-handed keyboard style—an inevitable result of working with bass and drum support far more often than alone.

Byard, however, has always had two hands, and even when working with a rhythm section, he thinks pianistically. He is a fascinating musical personality, and among the very few major figures who have been able to combine eclecticism and originality to create an intensely individual style.

One hears in Byard elements of the entire jazz piano tradition, from ragtime to Cecil Taylor, but always from a unique perspective. Like most true solo pianists, he is also a composer, and here, left free to select and develop his material, he shows just how wide a range he can span.

Byard is not a very tidy musician; he may miss a few notes in a run, or go on to a new idea before having fully explored the last one. Good for him. Neatness is not a prerequisite for jazz or any good music, and Byard can afford to drop ideas midway—he's got plenty to spare.

This is not to say that Byard can't be orderly if he chooses. The very lovely *Spanish Tinge*, with its impressionist harmonies, is an example of lucid development, and *New Orleans Strut*, Byard's impression of a Crescent City street parade, never falters through almost six minutes of evocative and imaginative music-making.

Byard's love of ragtime and stride piano are displayed on the delightful *Top of the Gate*. There is humor here, but not of the patronizing kind one sometimes encounters in recreation of older styles by younger players. That's because Byard feels these musics; he doesn't play with them, but on them.

Hollis Stomp is another lighthearted piece, a furiously paced game with *I Got Rhythm* charges; an exuberant tip of the cap to Art Tatum.

Like Tatum, Byard often plays show tunes. *Young Lovers*, one of only three tracks not using original material, is an example of his imaginative treatment. Byard almost re-composes the tune, and in the process (perhaps because he really likes it) strips it of Broadway pathos and in-

vests it with genuine feeling.

Even better is his *New Orleans*, graceful and nostalgic. Here, and in *Strut*, there are echoes of Garner, and as in the previously mentioned cases of ragtime and stride, Byard uses the style creatively, not as pastiche.

These are my favorite tracks, which is not to say that the rest is not of equal interest. *Seasons*, for example, shows the romantic side of Byard the composer, and the medley of *Place* and *Good Times* romps and rolls with great spirit. *Ballad* is more reflective and introspective than Byard usually is. But then, he is a man of many moods.

This is the kind of record too rarely made today: no gimmicks, just music as the musician wants to play it. That, of course, is a challenge, and Byard is up to it. Don Schlitten, who produced, is also responsible for the cover—one of the best and most original of recent times. Things being as they are, one assumes this fine record won't sell a million copies, but it is sure to be remembered when a lot of the stuff that does has long been rotting on the compost heap. —Morgenstern

LOU DONALDSON

EVERYTHING I PLAY IS FUNKY—Blue Note BST 84337: *Everything I Do Gonna Be Funky (From Now On)*; *Hamp's Hump*; *Over the Rainbow*; *Donkey Walk*; *West Indian Daddy*; *Minor Bash*.

Personnel: Eddie Williams or Blue Mitchell, trumpet; Lou Donaldson, alto saxophone; Melvin Sparks, guitar; Charles Earland or Lonnie Smith, organ; Jimmy Lewis, electric bass; Idris Muhammad, drums.

Rating: none

JOHN PATTON

ACCENT ON THE BLUES—Blue Note BST 84340: *Rakin' and Scrapin'*; *Freedom Jazz Dance*; *Captain Nasty*; *Village Lee*; *Lite Hit*; *Don't Let Me Lose This Dream*.

Personnel: Marvin Cabell, tenor saxophone, saxello, flute; James Ulmer, guitar; John Patton, organ; Leroy Williams, drums.

Rating: ★★½

I am amused that what seems a confession of pride in the Donaldson album title is likewise, in another perspective, a confession of guilt (of sorts), or at least coincidentally the focus of why Donaldson's music is so consistently tiresome to me. Everything Donaldson plays is funky, but more than merely funky in *beat*, also funky in quality (i.e. simply stale).

And so the Sultan of Schlock ambles again through the archetypal r&b/lounge jazz formula, yet to no greater moment than his previous cliché finger-popping albums. Meaty solos are abundant throughout (though few are particularly well-cooked), since the procedure of such music

Records are reviewed by Chris Albertson, Mike Bourne, Don DeMicheal, Gilbert M. Erskine, Alan Heineman, Wayne Jones, John Litweiler, John McDonough, Don Morgenstern, Don Nelsen, Harvey Pekar, Harvey Siders, Carol Sloane, and Jim Szantor.

Reviews are signed by the writers.

Ratings are: ★★★★★ excellent, ★★★★ very good, ★★★ good, ★★ fair, ★ poor.

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is and always has been each player doing his thing in turn over the several rhythmic variants, six of the most prevalent being: neo-bop (*Minor Bash*), rock blues (*Donkey Waltz*), quasi-Latin (*West Indian Daddy*), slow boogaloo (*Hamp's Hump*, complete with heavy bass-figure lead and silent breaks), hit attempt a la *The Sidewinder* (*Everything I Do*), and an almost mandatory skating rink sentimental confection (*Over the Rainbow*, with a definite besmirch to Oz).

But my comments are not to suggest that Donaldson's music is to be wholly disregarded or condemned, only that I honestly cannot discover in such overt funk as this any special value (other than the most innocent foot-tapping), nor from virtually all other similar-patterned pop—even though I recognize that Donaldson may be the very best of this breed of jazz artist, and that his latest date will surely become, like the others, a great commercial success.

Otherwise, the John Patton album is included here mainly because it is by far the most ultimately pleasant funky jazz I have witnessed in an era: unpretentious, straightforward cooking in the tradition of tired lounge trivia, but better. All the songs are easy and swing well (often so loose, like on *Freedom Jazz Dance*, as to seem technically crude), and the solos are generally tasty, especially Cabell's flute on *Don't Let Me Lose This Dream*, a hit tune for once unbutchered (unlike *Hurt So Bad*, the current unfortunate rage). Nothing else needs to be written, except to suggest that Patton's music should be best dug under conditions of much beer and gambling. —Bourne

LEE KONITZ

PEACEMEAL—Milestone MSP 9025: *Thumb Under*; *Lester Leaps In*; *Village Joke*; *Something to Sing*; *Peacemeal*; *Body and Soul*; *Peasant Dance*; *Fourth Dimension*; *Second Thoughts*; *Subconscious Lee*.

Personnel: Marshall Brown, valve trombone, baritone horn; Lee Konitz, alto, tenor, Multivider saxophone; Dick Katz, piano, electric piano; Eddie Gomez, bass; Jack De Johnette, drums.

db/RC Rating: ★★★★★

A sense of science pervades this music—an air of esthetic alchemy. Very much like the improvisational experiments of his previous *Duets* album, several of the pieces here pursue other musical hypotheses of a kind: the adaptation of three Bela Bartok compositions and the investigation of two American jazz solo classics.

Transcribed by Marshall Brown from the *Mikrokosmos*, each of the Bartok tunes opens with a short thematic statement focusing the simple ethnic rhythms, then moves into easy improvisations by the ensemble and five soloists. While *Thumb*